

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD 16 June 2023

REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

CARED FOR CHILDREN, CARE EXPERIENCED YOUNG PEOPLE AND CORPORATE PARENTING – REFRESHING OUR APPROACH

SUMMARY

This report provides an update on the refreshed approach around supporting children and young people in care, those that are leaving care and the Council's approach to corporate parenting. It updates on activities undertaken to refresh the strategy for cared for and care experienced children and young people, incorporating the specific challenges identified in the ILACS inspection. The refreshed strategy and accompanying action plan will be presented to the next corporate parenting board meeting for agreement.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Corporate Parenting Board :

1. Comments on the updates and activity to date.
2. Agrees for a final version of this report to be submitted to Corporate Parenting Board in August 2023.

PURPOSE AND CONTEXT

1. Work to refresh the strategic approach for children in our care and care leavers has been presented to the Corporate Parenting Board to gain a steer and include members in the development of the strategy and action plan.
2. The recent ILACS inspection identified several areas for improvement. These have therefore been included in the overall improvement plan but have also been considered in the development of this refreshed approach, which is much broader in its scope as it also relates to wider plans around corporate parenting.

WHERE WE HAD GOT TO

3. A series of discussions and activities have already taken place to inform the refresh of the strategy, culminating in a presentation to the Corporate Parenting Board in February 2023 which mapped out the basis for a new strategy, and the outcomes of the work undertaken to date.
4. Discussions on key priorities have taken place with children and young people, staff and members were also asked for their key priorities around corporate parenting These have been included in the development of key priorities.
5. Work on the new strategy was deferred during the inspection but it is planned to take an update to Corporate Parenting Board in June 2023 and for full sign off in August. A report will also be presented to Cabinet in September.

6. A visit from the DfE care leaver advisers was planned for June but unfortunately this was cancelled and will need to be rearranged.

WHAT OFSTED SAID

7. Ofsted reported the following key issues:
 - a. There is more work to do to improve the offer for care leavers – progress has been too slow
 - b. More opportunities are needed for children, young people and care leavers to have a voice
 - c. There are challenges on placement sufficiency, and especially on foster care
 - d. Pathway plans lack SMART actions
 - e. There is a lack of consistency in the personal adviser support for young people – partly linked to the change in structure which is leading to some inexperienced staff working with care leavers
 - f. Challenges on appropriate accommodation for care leavers
 - g. The care leavers offer not being well promoted
 - h. A need for greater participation

THE PROPOSED APPROACH IN RESPONSE

8. Following the ILACS inspection, we have taken the time to reflect on the work to date which was in progress, and the requirements of the Ofsted inspection.
9. The following approach is proposed:
 - a. We continue to develop the new corporate parenting strategy for cared for and care experienced children and young people based on the priorities already identified:
 - i. Stability*
 - ii. Resilience*
 - iii. Education, employment and training*
 - iv. Good health*
 - v. Listening*
 - vi. Being a good corporate parent*
 - b. That we will include in the new strategy a further specific priority on our work with and for care experienced young people (care leavers). This strand was be informed by the outcomes of a visit by the DfE Care Leavers adviser in June, though this has not been postponed to September at the earliest.
 - c. An initial set of actions are included under each heading. These will be used to engage in further development of the strategy through engagement with children and young people and care leavers and partners.
 - d. An indicative plan on a page is attached at Annex 1. This is the basis of what the action plan will reflect but at this stage is a draft
10. Two specific elements of the proposed strategy are outlined below in more detail as they are especially important parts of the post ILACS response.

CARE EXPERIENCED YOUNG PEOPLE PRIORITY

11. This priority in the strategy will set out the framework for how we respond to the specific challenges in the Ofsted report which were around:

- a. Visibility and engagement
- b. The offer for care leavers is not well promoted or visible enough
- c. Quality of PA support.

12. Our proposals in response were that we will:

- a. Reshape our approach to personal advisers noting the comments in the Ofsted report that our current structure is not achieving what we hoped it would.
- b. Refresh and restate our ambition and our offer
- c. Establish a Care Leavers Board to drive forward support for care leavers, chaired by the Chief Executive.
- d. Learn from the DfE advisors visit and incorporate his views in the plan going forward.

13. A draft new vision and offer for care experienced young people is included at Annex 2.

BEING A GOOD CORPORATE PARENT PRIORITY

14. Given the specific importance attached to this priority for the Council, the following section outlines this specific priority in more detail.

15. The overall priority is to ensure that the Council:

- a. Meets its statutory duties
- b. And goes beyond them in promoting CIOC and doing all we can to support them to achieve.

16. The basis of this approach is that there will be action in four key areas:

- a. For the Council as a whole
- b. For all services
- c. For members
- d. For all individuals

17. For the Council

- a. Adoption of the new strategy and approach
- b. Commit to, and implement the changes that are agreed by the Regional Care Leavers Board

18. For services...we will be promoting the following:

- a. **Work opportunities** (recruitment, training, work experience, mentoring, 'a place in the 'family business')
- b. Support for **events and activities** (including Comms and organisational support to make them effective, but also turning encouraging attendance where appropriate)
- c. To ensure the **needs of children and young people in care are prioritised in Directorate priorities, business plans and delivery** in a way which is relevant to that Directorate including, for example:
 - i. Legal representation
 - ii. In any capital or physical investment programmes such as children's homes
 - iii. In any HR policy development

- iv. In any cultural activity
 - d. Maximise the provision of **subsidies for children in our care** – e.g. free passes to activities and events, prioritisation of tickets
 - e. Nominate a **champion** to be a point of contact to disseminate / promote and support
 - f. To **encourage staff to participate** in the No Limits scheme.
19. **For Councillors**...we will be simplifying the ask and making it more specific:
- a. Be aware: Understand our statutory and corporate responsibilities (i.e. we will train you)
 - b. Be accountable: Accept the responsibility to be thinking – is this good enough – challenge us, demand more as ‘our children’ – role for all Cllrs but a bigger role for CPB members (so we will give you information)
 - c. Be ambitious – Talk up the achievements of CIOC (i.e. not talk down)
 - d. Be welcoming: Support the move for more children’s home provision locally (i.e. work with us to dispel myths, support planning)
 - e. Be there: Attend events and be visible
 - f. Be involved: Give time / money to the corporate effort via No Limits
20. **For individual staff...** To participate in the No Limits scheme.
21. No Limits is the name given to the programme to support individual contributions to our work with and for children in our care and care leavers. A revised project team has been meeting for 12 months following on from the previous planning work carried out in 2019. The membership is council wide and has representatives from all directorates.
22. Work Completed 2019-2021:
- a. A fund was set up with TV Community Foundation alongside a web page that allowed people to make donations.
 - b. An application process has been developed and tested and approximately £7000 in grants have been awarded to young people so far.
 - c. Review now taking place as part of ongoing work to refine application process with young people.
23. From the start the project has involved consultation and involvement with young people.
24. There are two main elements to the scheme – the opportunity for all staff to contribute either through giving time or giving money (or both).

Giving time

25. This will give people the opportunity to support young people on a voluntary basis through 2 routes:
- a. Spending time with young people one to one
 - b. Offering young people opportunities to come along to anything they already do. This includes social events, leisure activities, sporting and recreational activities.
26. Roles and responsibilities guidance have been developed alongside young people. A training and development plan is written which includes safeguarding. (it is proposed that this will be delivered during work time)

27. Current arrangements for this scheme are:

- a. We have identified 5 SBC staff who will pilot
- b. DBS process has been completed
- c. A 2-day training programme has been delivered to pilot volunteers and mentors
- d. We have several young people-involved and we have matched 2 young people
- e. There is draft handbook written and will be revised following the pilot.
- f. Each Volunteer will have a mentor
- g. Agreed expenses for the pilot (with boundaries)

Giving money

28. Current arrangements for this scheme include:

- a. Digital system has been developed and tested
- b. Systems developed with finance.
- c. Pilot has been tested with 17 volunteers and monthly contributions are paid into the No Limits account.
- d. Working with Cllr Evans to roll out the scheme to members.

Gift of Giving

29. We will continue to run our annual Gift of Giving Campaign at Christmas which invites staff to contribute a nominal donation towards a book or voucher for a cared for and care experienced children and young people.

30. Further campaigns are being developed such as, staff or members can contribute to 'starter packs' that support a young person during significant periods in their life, such as setting up home, moving to university or having a baby.

External Projects

31. Continue to support the More stuff like this please! Work focused in supporting cared for children and young people into creative activities in conjunction with ARC and Blue Cabin

SUMMARY AND NEXT STEPS

32. This report sets out a revised set of actions and asks to support corporate parenting in the Borough.

33. It sets out further details of the proposed strategy and approach

34. It outlines the basis of a new offer for care leavers

35. It sets out a way of working for the Council as a whole, and through Directorates, to support corporate parenting priorities, as well as the opportunity for individuals to contribute.

36. Next steps are:

- a. To refine these proposals following feedback;
- b. communicate the proposals and develop the best means of documenting and telling the story
- c. To refine the approach further

- d. To launch No Limits – July 2023
- e. To sign off the new corporate parenting strategy in September
- f. To host the DfE adviser for care leavers in 2023
- g. To report on progress to CMT and the Corporate Parenting Board on a 6 monthly basis.

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Annex 1 - Corporate Parenting Strategy – indicative plan on a page

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

STABILITY – enough safe stable homes, where children are wanted, cared for	RESILIENCE – Social networks, lifeskills, opportunities to experience	EET – opportunities and support to progress	HEALTH – physical and mental health and wellbeing	LISTENING – Ensuring we listen, action and feedback	CARE EXPERIENCED –	CORPORATE PARENTING
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ACTIONS – WHAT WILL WE DO

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Sufficiency strategy New homes Foster carers capacity increased Safe homes 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Participation Friendships Lifelong Links programme Cultural experiences (MSTLP!) Advocates, mentors, buddy volunteers and independent visiting 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Targeted work – PAs Clinic Guaranteed work experience / placements SBC based opportunities Raised aspirations 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Health assessments – initial and review Development of health passports SDQs usage and reporting Mental health support 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> LTA groups Ongoing feedback mechanisms CPB engagement Senior leaders events Recruitment and appraisal feedback and engagement 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Ambition and vision Care Experienced Board Refreshed CL offer Here whenever you need us approach Accommodation options Mental health support and priority opportunities employment opportunities 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Strategic engagement – refocused CPB Officer leadership group Members asks and training Directorates – service asks No Limits – the opportunity for all staff and members to be involved
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WHAT IMPACT WILL WE HAVE? Supported by suitable measures, some of which address the key national data sets

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Placement choice Stability improves Increasing proportion placed in borough 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Self-reported wellbeing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increasing EET figures Contacts and engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Self reported health SDQ scores improving 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Levels of engagement increasing Surveys showing young people feel listened to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contact rates EET Accommodation Self-reported health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CYP feedback Member feedback
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Annex 2

Care Experienced Vision¹

Designed by you, for you

- Coproduced from start to finish

Whatever it takes...for how long it takes – you are all relevant / important to us

- Anyone who has even been in care will get support (i.e. above stat duties, won't cover all allowances, but we will continue to work with you)

One Stop Shop – making it easy to get help, connect, and just be...

- A place (real and virtual) to share and engage. Your choice: face to face, phone, app, website
- A way of working – we will bring help to you, not refer you on

Personal to you – listening to you for as long as you need us

- Highly skilled, committed advisers
- Team around you

The extended family and the family business

- SBC care and support – we will support you however we can, and you have the chance to tell us what else we can do to help you

All the help and advice you need – our offer

- Health and wellbeing
- Employment
- Education and learning
- Relationships and people important to you
- Money
- Your home
- Your voice, participation, community

¹ Examples only....needs co-production

Health and wellbeing

- Support you to register with a doctor, dentist, and optician.
- Attend appointments with you if you need.
- Give you information on healthy living, access to healthy eating advice and guidance in one to one sessions or group work. *Dedicated PH nurse?*
- Give you information on getting help to pay for prescriptions (NHS low-income scheme).
- Support you to move from CAMHS to adult mental health services. *Specially commissioned support?*
- access to a dedicated psychological well-being practitioner or counsellor?
- Give you help with transport costs when attending health appointments.
- Provide you with a card to access leisure centres. *SBC or Tees Valley?*
- Special support for you as a parent – *specific programme with midwives?*
- Childcare (and pay for it?)
- We will support you to attend important appointments about your child.
- We will give you information about health drop-in sessions.
- Health passport
- C-Cards / sexual health priority
- We will give you the details of helplines, apps and websites that are free to access.
- Food / dinners

Employment

- Job club / ETHub access? Advice; CVs; applications / interviews; clothing; job fairs
- We will support you to travel to an interview.
- SBC guaranteed interview for their apprenticeships and jobs if you fit the essential criteria / *guaranteed 6 month trial*
- Rights and entitlements when employed.
- Offer work experience in the Council
- Dedicated DWP support.
- We will provide advice about budgeting money you receive from employment.
- Dedicated work coach for care leavers?
- A reference for employment applications.

Participation

- Train as a peer mentor.
- Attend the leaving care forum each month.
- Recruitment, takeover, service development
- Corporate Parenting Board attendance
- Being a participation lead for 12 months in our team
- Plan and attend events
- Voting
- Volunteering support via specific Catalyst scheme?
- Training / telling people / education
- Managing the No Limits programme

Relationships and people close to you

- We promote family time. In some circumstances will financially support you to travel to contact immediate family members. *Lifelong links?*

- Provide support and advice to help you regain or maintain contact with friends, family or previous carers.
- Advice and support about positive, healthy relationships.
- Having an advocate.
- Be a peer mentor
- Get a mentor
- If living away, transport back e.g. University?

Where you live

- we will help you to find a home
- We will promote staying put in your foster care placement if you want to remain living there after you turn 18.
- Access to Supported Lodgings Provision.
- An opportunity to have a taste of independent living (*managed taster flats*)
- Supported accommodation
- YMCA / other?
- Help to bid for properties and priority
- Exemption from Council tax wherever you live
- Home allowance
- Independent living skills workshops and groups
- We will provide you with a reference to support any housing applications.

Education and learning

- You will receive support, advice and guidance from your Personal Advisor regarding your education and training needs.
- You will have access to a job club.
- We will offer you support to attend open days with colleges and training providers
- You can access bursary payments from your college or training provider.
- University? Support through looking at options; attending open days; forms; bursaries; accommodation; equipment
- SEN adviser / support

Money

- A weekly living allowance for some? Paying rent etc
- Council tax exemption
- Benefit claims / job search
- Access and support to spend your setting up home allowance to furnish a tenancy of your own.
- Bank account support (credit union??) / individual savings account
- Budget planning
- Winter fuel

- Bursary support via providers or via No Limits
- University costs – accommodation and fees / equipment
- Mobile phone / laptop /tablet??
- Bus / transport passes